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Leadership Competency Series

Purpose and the Picture

Vision, the picture of our desired future is left-brain reasoning. Values, the emotional and moral aspects are right brain reasoning. Both these rationale link together to form Mission, the purpose of existence, says M R Chandramowly.

IT is a Saturday evening. You are relaxed, watching the horizon, sitting on your balcony swing at your flat, 6th floor, Royal Castle. As you bring your focus from the setting sun, to the moving traffic on the road in front of your place, you notice a silent funeral procession. You see some known people in the procession moving along. Curious! You get up suddenly, take your elevator down, go out and join the procession. You follow the funeral parlour to find out more. As you reach the crematorium you notice the flowers, fragrance of dhoop, hear crying family members talks and epitaph of friends and you recognise the voices. You share the sorrow and feeling radiating from the hearts of people around there. As you go nearer to the head of procession and look at the dead body, it looks very familiar. You suddenly come face to face with yourself. This is your own ceremonial! All your relatives, friends, office colleagues are there to show their love, concern and appreciation about you. You are able to hear them clearly. Each one of them talks about you.

Now, imagine yourself there. Would you like to hear what each person say about you? What would you like them to say? What kind of spouse, son, father, teacher, student, boss, subordinate, friend and enemy you have been in your life? How did you play these roles? Can you hear them now? What are they saying? Listen!.... That is how you start working on your mission statement, to write down the purpose of your existence!

If it's not written - it's not there!

Mission is more discovered first and then created. It clarifies goals for our roles. Different roles that we play in our lives must be enacted with a balance. Besides the role of "Self" we play other roles.... spouse, father, son, boss, associate, friend or enemy.... However, the principle role "self", Converges all the different role beams to one perspective - our purpose.

Have you written a personal mission statement, which provides meaning, purpose,

and direction to your life roles? Do all your actions flow from your mission? If you feel like proceeding further to work on this. “Begin with the end in mind” (The seven habits of highly effective people) by Dr Stephen R Covey. One must know where he is heading. “If you don’t know where you’re going, any path will get you there.”

Mission, vision and values

Mission, vision, and values are the glue that holds an organisation or a person together. Mission is the purpose; the reason for existence, Vision is the mental image of our destination, and the picture we place before us to own the real one.

Vision is what keeps us moving forward, even against discouraging odds. It is the most powerful motivator in an organisation. If it is vivid and meaningful enough, people can do astounding things to bring it to realisation. No amount of external help will be able to get people off their butts if they lack personal vision.

Values define the path we prefer to reach our destination and goals are the milestones in this journey. Our achievement and success rests on understanding our goals. Clarity of our purpose and vision improves long-term focus and day-to-day action consistency. Vision, is our left-brain reasoning. Values, the emotional and moral aspects are right brain reasoning. Both these rationale link together to form Mission. Whether it is an organisation or individual, creating mission, setting vision and deciding the values provide a framework for long-term sustenance and accomplishment of chosen objectives. One needs to plan, prior to proceed – failing to plan is planning to fail.

Mission statements

Mission and vision statements are not just critical words. The spirit behind these words are very specific, depends on how each organisation defines it. The process of translating Mission or Vision in the execution is to set the direction and transfer the ownership of the end result to the front-line employees.

Mission is a brief, concise statement, which defines the business you are in, for whom, and why. It defines unique contribution of your existence. A good mission statement addresses the bigger picture of what has to be achieved, opportunities around and inspires commitment in employees who must fit their abilities to organisational need. A mission statement must answer five questions: (1) What is that unique contribution to the society or profession that would not happen if you do not exist? (2) Who is your customer - to whom do you deliver products and

services? (3) What are the interests/priorities of your customers? (4) What are the boundaries (organisational or geographic) within which you operate? (5) How would you like to be seen by you customers?

Here is an example of mission statement of an organisation: "The mission of Merck is to provide society with superior products and services, innovations and solutions that improve the quality of life and satisfy customer needs, to provide employees with meaningful work and advancement opportunities and investors with a superior rate of return."

A personal mission statement captures your purpose – why you exist – reason for being, what you do and whom you serve and for what purpose? If you want to discover your inherent purpose, think of a person who made a positive difference in your life. This individual can be anyone, a parent, a teacher, a historical figure, a friend, a leader or a relative. These people may or may not be aware of their influence on you. What qualities does these people have which you would like to develop? The qualities that you admire about these people could be various aspects of their character. It is what that distinguishes them as who they are. You have the opportunity to develop your character to be as admirable, as is the character of the people you admire.

If you write few words that describes what you admire about these people, you have identified the words that are pulsating in your inner rudder. If you could spend a day in a good library studying anything you wanted, what would you read? That is what you enjoy. You would like to live for those characteristics. Your mission is probably being built around those motives. As you work through drafting your mission statement, carefully consider your own character and your vision for your life, and begin formulating a plan that will start moving you in the direction you want to go.

"Live, Love and leave a legacy" (Stephen Covey). "My life is my message" (Gandhi), are some specimens of a good personal mission statement. They are simple and significant in meaning.

Living mission statements by breathing them in actions.

"Putting people first", though has a commercial tone, there is also a moral reason for British Airways to indicate that we are all people and life would be better for all of us if we took a little more care of each other. This moral rationale was put high on the agenda when 35,000 BA staff went on the "Putting People First" training program. A sense of mission is an emotional commitment. Working with a

“good” organisation does not guarantee that employees will have sense of mission.

Consider how calls are answered by telephone operators or the mannerism of security guard at car parking area of an organisation. Though any corporate policy will have written and clear strategy and value statements, a telephone operator or a car park scout, some times may not make you feel that they have a sense of mission. A mission statement is hardly meaningful if it is only hung on corporate walls without getting displayed through the actions of its employees.

This leadership competency “Managing Mission and Vision” is supported by human values like fortitude, perception of ultimate, trust, understanding, and respect to individual, non-egoism and nobility.

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